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TWO POPULAR BALLADS.

EDITED BY G. L. KITTREDGE.

THE BISHOP OF OLD CANTERBURY.

THE following version of "King John and the Bishop" (Child, No. 45) is the form in which the ballad was remembered, in 1907, by the eminent astronomer, Professor Asaph Hall (1829-1908) from the singing of his grandfather in Goshen, Connecticut, many years ago. It was sent to Professor R. W. Willson, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, by Professor Hall, October 1, 1907, with a note, in which he remarks, "There are omissions of lines and probably of verses but it is the best I can do."

Professor Hall's version is related to the Brooksby broadside version (Child's *B*), but shows many interesting variations. It is not from Percy's version ("Reliques," 1765, ii, 302), as collation shows (compare, for example, the third stanza with Percy's seventh and with the fifth in Child's *B*).

See, also, "Roxburgh Ballads," ed. Ebsworth, vi, 746-754.

1. Old King John, that bloody old knight,
Possessed great power to pull down great might;
And as he was sitting, to make his heart merry,
He sent for the Bishop of Old Canterbury.
Tra-la-la, tra-la-la, tra-la-la-la, tra-la-la.
2. "How now, noble bishop? 'T is said of thee
That thou keepest a far better table than me;
But if you can't answer to my questions three,
Your head shall be severed from your body.
3. "My first question is, with all my estate,
And golden crown I wear on my pate,
With all my nobility, joy, and great mirth,
You must tell to one penny just what I'm worth.
4. "My second question is, without any doubt,
How long I would be travelling this wide world about;
The third question answer as quick as a wink,
And tell me presently what I do think."
5. The bishop went home with heart rather sad;
He met an old shepherd with crook and bag:
"Good morning, noble bishop," the shepherd did cry,
"What news, what news from the king's court to-day?"

6. "Sad news, sad news!" the bishop did cry;

 "If I can't answer his questions three,
 My head will be severed from my body."
7. "His first question is, with all his estate,
 And golden crown he wears on his pate,
 With all his nobility, joy, and great mirth,
 I must tell to one penny just what he is worth."
8. "His second question is, without any doubt,
 How long he would be travelling this wide world about;
 The third question I must answer as quick as a wink,
 And tell him presently what he doth think."
9. "For one suit of your apparel
 To King John I will go and settle this quarrel."
 "One suit of my apparel I freely give,
 And ten pounds a year as long as you live."
10. "Good morning, good morning!" the king did cry;
 "How you come here to live or to die?"
 "If I can't answer to your questions three,
 My head will be taken from my body."
11. "My first question is, with all my estate,
 And golden crown I wear on my pate,
 With all my nobility, joy, and great mirth,
 You must tell to one penny just what I'm worth."
12. "For thirty pieces of silver our Saviour was sold
 Unto the Jews so cruel and bold;
 So twenty and nine I think is your due,
 For He must be one piece better than you."
13. "My second question is, without any doubt,
 How long I would be travelling this wide world about."
 "If you would rise with yon sun and ride with the same,
 In twenty-four hours you would it obtain."
14. "My third question answer as quick as a wink,
 And tell me presently what I do think."
 "That I can do, and it will make your heart merry,—
 You think I'm the Bishop of Old Canterbury."
15. "That is not all, I'm here all alone;
 I'm a poor shepherd, and the bishop's at home."

16. "Go tell the noble bishop, and tell him for me,
He keeps a crafty fellow when he keeps thee."

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[THE HANGMAN'S TREE.]

The following version of "The Maid Freed from the Gallows" (Child, No. 95) was communicated May 23, 1905, by Mr. Reed Smith, of Columbia, South Carolina, as learned in August, 1903, at Jager, West Virginia, from a mountaineer who could neither read nor write. It is almost identical with the version printed in Child, v, 296 ("The Hangman's Tree"); cf. also version *B* (Child, ii, 351). See the Introduction to the one-volume collection of Ballads, in the "Cambridge Poets," pp. xxv, xxvi.

1. "Slack your rope, hangsman,
And slack it for awhile;
I think I see my brother coming,
Riding many a mile.
2. "O brother, have you brought me gold?
Or have you paid my fee?
Or have you come to see me hanging
On the gallows tree?"

3. "I've neither brought you gold;
I've neither paid your fee;
But I have come to see you hanging
On the gallows tree."

(So on with the whole family, — sister, father, mother, etc., *ad infinitum.*)

4. "Slack your rope, hangsman,
And slack it for awhile;
I think I see my true-love coming,
Riding many a mile.
5. "O true-love, have you brought me gold?
Or have you paid my fee?
Or have you come to see me hanging
On the gallows tree?"
6. "Yes, I have brought you gold;
Yes, I have paid your fee;
Nor have I come to see you hanging
On the gallows tree."